

**SUMMARY OF THE
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 1999**

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Monday, January 11, 1999, at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) as part of the Fourth NELAC Interim Meeting in Bethesda, Maryland. The meeting was led by its Chair, Mr. John P. Anderson of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Laboratories. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Anderson, Chair, welcomed committee members and participants to this committee session. He noted that this chapter had been approved at NELAC IV in June, 1998, and that the committee had few proposed changes to discuss.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3.1.1(d): Mr. Anderson noted that a request had been made to revise the database update requirement from weekly to daily for all accrediting authorities. The committee agreed to change the wording for database update intervals to “at a minimum, on a weekly basis.” The wording may need to include a requirement for noting that the database was accessed but not changed in weeks of no activity. The committee will coordinate these issues with the Database Committee.

Conflicts of interest: The committee discussed the issue of conflict of interest within an accrediting authority. Specifically, the private sector expressed prior concern over an accrediting authority’s use of assessors who may work in the State laboratory. The committee proposed the following addition to 6.3.3.1(I): “and employees of the accrediting authority’s laboratory accreditation program who do not have any responsibilities associated with laboratory analytical work carried out in any laboratory operated by the department or agency in which the accrediting authority is located organizationally.” Attendees were concerned that the new wording would unfairly restrict some accrediting authorities. Because the suggested change originated with concerns from private sector representatives, the committee agreed that the wording should revert back to its original form, and that the committee have discussions with Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) to explain the difficulty that had resulted from the proposed wording.

Definitions: A question was raised regarding the definition of a “governmental laboratory,” and the definition of a “NELAP-recognized accrediting authority,” both of which had not been included in the glossary. The chair committed to once again ask that these terms be included in the glossary.

Review of NELAP progress: Ms. Betsy Dutrow provided a review of NELAP progress to date in assessing applications from accrediting authorities. Twenty accrediting authorities have applied for accreditation, and three have since either been placed on hold or dropped out, leaving

seventeen still being assessed. The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) review process starts with application receipt and completeness review, at which point the application is sent to the designated EPA Regional Lead Assessor, who assembles an assessment team, including a State representative, a NELAP representative (either Ms. Betsy Dutrow, Ms. Jeannie Mourrain, or Mr. Fred Siegelman) and other team members from the EPA Region, other states or federal agencies. The technical review of the application is then performed, followed by an on-site assessment conducted by the assessment team.

At that point, a decision is made to recommend accreditation or non-accreditation. At the present time, all 17 completeness reviews have been done, with 13 agencies passing the review. The technical review has been completed for 8 agencies, and 7 on-site assessments have been completed, with 1 agency having been recommended for NELAP recognition. At this time, no States have been awarded NELAP recognition. The process has been very positive, and NELAP has learned a great deal in the process.

Consistency of assessments of accrediting authorities: Attendees expressed concerns about standardization and documentation of the process to ensure consistency of assessments. According to Ms. Dutrow, no Accrediting Authority Review Board has been instituted yet by NELAP. There is currently no external oversight of the accreditation process for accrediting authorities. Ms. Dutrow suggested that NELAP submit to the committee a copy of their quality system for assessing accrediting authorities. She assured the attendees that the Regional Lead Assessors have monthly meetings to compare notes and share insights.

Discussion turned to reciprocity between accrediting authorities during the two-year grace period during which states must make legislative changes to meet NELAP requirements. Mr. Anderson assured attendees that this issue has been thoroughly discussed in the past and that the standard as currently written addresses this issue adequately. Though potential exists for laboratories to be accredited which do not necessarily meet all NELAC criteria, the situation must be resolved within the two-year grace period to fully meet the standard, and all approved laboratories must be recognized by all accrediting authorities. Mr. Anderson suggested that this issue should be added to NELAC's frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) website.

Ms. Mourrain addressed the issue of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) accreditation of the EPA and state laboratories and the need for recognition of the EPA as an accrediting authority. EPA must itself be assessed as an accrediting authority and meet all requirements which the other accrediting authorities are required to meet. She stated that state laboratories could not all be accredited by the EPA accrediting authority due a to lack of resources, and would probably need to go to other States for assessment and accreditation. Mr. Anderson urged EPA to consider being better able to assess and accredit the State laboratories.

Future activities of the Accrediting Authority Committee: Mr. Anderson requested that attendees provide suggestions of future activities. The committee discussed the potential for international recognition of the NELAC standard by International Standards Organization (ISO), specifically ISO Guides 58 and 61 (Chapter 6 is currently ISO 58 compliant, but not ISO 61 compliant). The committee needs to explore this further.

SUMMARY

The committee expressed its gratitude to Ms. Dutrow and Ms. Mourrain for helping to clarify issues at this meeting and for presenting an overview of the accrediting authority assessment process. There being no further time for discussion, and because all necessary committee business had been completed, Mr. Anderson adjourned the meeting.

**ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 1999**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Discuss with ELAB alternate language for 6.3.3.1.1(i) in order to resolve their concerns about conflict of interest	March 31, 1999
2.	Get glossary items added to the NELAC glossary	March 31, 1999
3.	After reviewing current EPA checklists of the process used to recognize accrediting authorities, offer observations to NELAP.	June 1, 1999

**PARTICIPANTS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 11, 1999**

Name	Affiliation	Address
Anderson, John Chair	IL EPA, Division of Laboratories	T: (217) 782 - 6455 F: (217) 524 - 0944 E: jpanderson@epa.state.il.us
Cusick, William	American Assoc. of Test Control Officials	T: (916) 262 - 1434 F: (916) 262 - 1572 E: wcusick@cdfa.ca.gov
Farrell, John	Analytical Excellence, Inc.	T: (407) 331 - 5040 F: (407) 331 - 4025 E: AEX@ix.netcom.com
Flowers, Jefferson	Flowers Chemical Laboratories, Inc.	T: (407) 339 - 5984 F: (407) 260 - 6110 E: jeff@flowerslabs.com
Johnson, Louis	Louisiana Dept. of Environmental Quality	T: (225) 765 - 2953 F: (225) 265 - 2725 E: louis_j@deq.state.la.us
Madding, Carol	USEPA/OW	T: (513) 569 - 7402 F: (513) 569 - 7191 E: madding.caroline@epamail.epa.gov
Meyer, James	NC DENR/DEM Chemistry Lab	T: (919) 733 - 3908 F: (919) 733 - 6241 E: james_meyer@wqlab.enr.state.nc.us
Ross, Michael	Environmental Management Systems, Registrar Accreditation Board	T: (414) 272 - 3937 F: (414) 765 - 8661 E: mross@rabnet.com
Shields, Aurora	KS Dept of Health and Environment	T: (785) 296 - 6198 F: (785) 296 - 8068 E: laportela@aol.com
Wyeth, Robert	Intertek Testing Services	T: (802) 655 - 1203 F: (802) 655 - 1248 E: RobertW@STL-Inc.com
Crankshaw, Owen Contractor Support	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-7470 F: (919) 541-7386 E: osc@rti.org